

Pastor's Reflections ...

by Jeffrey E. Frantz

For everything there is a season, a time for everything under heaven ...
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.
(John 1:1-5)

For everything there is a season. Well, by the time most of you read this, the New Year will have broken in and the Frantzes will be returning from Panama (Dec. 25 to Jan. 5). It's always exciting to return to Yvette's native land, where we first met back in 1967. Can it be that long ago?

Yes, it can! Life's unfolding transitions continue to march along. As Ecclesiastes says, *For everything there is a season, a time for everything under heaven.*

I've been particularly tuned in to *transitions* since the death of my father over three months back. With my mother dying twenty months earlier, I find myself very much aware that I no longer have that special place called *home* to call or visit, as the spirit moves.

While I can intellectually and rationally accept my parents' dying, in terms of my personal identity and my daily routines, I just don't like it. It still seems unreal that I will never be able to hug them or talk to them again, at least not in the usual sense.

Fortunately, my three siblings and I are very close and, of course, my two daughters have always been the light of my life.

Transitions. Transitions of all sorts take time to settle in. I think of President-elect Obama and all that he and his family will be going through as they, with all the world watching, move to the White House and begin to take on the enormous problems that our nation is grappling with at the moment.

Here in our church, transitions are the way of things—with the usual flow of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. And all the time, new faces coming into our mix and familiar faces leaving. Again, *for everything there is a season ...*

Part of what I like about the New Year is the sense we have of a new beginning. Always, there's a freshness to the New Year. In recent months, around our church, we've enjoyed an influx of more people than at any time in my eight-plus years here. Again, *transitions* and opportunities for new beginnings.

What our church is about is community. All the time, we are building up our *community of faith*. The building of community is what churches are about. Just as in the prologue to John's gospel (above), Christian community, at its best, is like a light in the world. It is a light of hope and promise, a beacon of mercy and compassion.

Again, at its best, it is a light that no darkness can overcome.

In the year ahead, let us all reflect on what we can do—both personally and as families—to help strengthen and deepen our community. This is another form of our Stewardship, or our caring for God's church.

Together, we can continue to build ourselves up through education and Bible Study; through fellowship and spiritual growth experiences; and always through our hands-on Christian outreach into our community and beyond.

May the new beginnings of the New Year break upon us, as we welcome new persons into our church family and continue to be a source of mutual support and love! In the midst of whatever transitions each of you is working through, may God bless you and keep you!